

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20509

STATEMENT OF GENERAL BENJAMIN O. DAVIS, JR., ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR ENVIRONMENT, SAFETY AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS SUBMITTED TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON TREASURY, POSTAL SERVICE AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT OF THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, RESPECTING AIRPORT PRECLEARANCE PROCEDURES, WEDNESDAY MARCH 7, 1973.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

I appreciate this opportunity to provide the Department's views to this Committee on the subject of "preclearance" procedures.

Preclearance is the process by which the four Federal inspection agencies (Customs, Immigration, Public Health, and Plant/Animal Quarantine) clear passengers from certain airports in Canada and the Bahamas for entry into the United States. Preclearance has been in existence since January 1952 when it was introduced in Toronto, Canada. Since that time, preclearance has been instituted at three other Canadian airports--Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Montreal--and in Bermuda and Nassau in the Bahamas.

Since its inception in 1967, the Department of Transportation has supported the use of preclearance as a method of facilitating the flow of visitors and returning American citizens to the United States. Today, on behalf of the Department, I wish to endorse the recent action taken by the Congress to allow the preclearance program to continue. Naturally, our endorsement assumes that adequate facilities and personnel to carry out proper inspections will be provided.

It is our view that, for a number of reasons, the practice of preclearance should be continued. First, preclearance provides great convenience for the passenger, particularly for those continuing on a

through-flight beyond the first entry point in the United States. Second, aircraft which have been precleared can land at airports in the United States which do not have inspection facilities, thereby reducing the passenger burden at our large airports which serve substantial amounts of international and domestic traffic. For instance, a precleared flight from Montreal bound for New York could land at LaGuardia, rather than disembark its passengers through the heavily-used terminal for international arrivals at John F. Kennedy International Airport. Third, discontinuance of the preclearance service would require that existing inspection facilities be enlarged and that new facilities be provided at some airports. At present twenty-one cities receive approximately 40,000 flights annually from preclearance points. Customs facilities at 11 of these facilities are limited. The airline industry estimates that if preclearance is discontinued, the cost of enlarging existing inspection facilities and providing new ones will exceed \$20 million. We might also point out that if preclearance were terminated, the airlines now serving preclearance airports, would face substantial increases in their operating costs.

In sum, the Department endorses the action taken by the Congress to allow continuation of the preclearance program.

Thank you for this opportunity to present the Department's views on this important subject. I will be happy to respond to any questions submitted by members of the Committee.